

ARA/ECA: MMAdams
(Drafting Office and Officer)

SUBJECT: U.S.-Argen

PARTICIPANTS: Minis
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the Foreign Minister is looking forward to meeting again with the Secretary at the coming UNGA. He said that the meeting has been scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on September 26, 1979, and pointed out that Ambassador Aja Espil probably will suggest to DAS Eaton in their meeting that the Bureau and the Argentine Embassy might work out a common agenda for this meeting.

Addressing the question of our close contact with the Embassy of Argentina, DAS Eaton agreed that it is important that Country Directorates have close and friendly relations with the embassies of the countries for which they are responsible. He said that this often is difficult because of the press of everyday work, but expressed pleasure that the Argentine Embassy has a good working relationship with ARA/ECA. DAS Eaton also noted that he understood that the meeting between Secretary Vance and Foreign Minister Pastor in Quito had been useful for both of our countries. DAS Eaton did not respond to the suggestion that we might work out a common agenda for the upcoming bilateral between Secretary Vance and Minister Pastor at the UNGA.

Minister Dalton next turned to the subject of the recent NAM meeting in Havana, and said that he believed Ambassador Aja Espil would have a copy of the speech given at the NAM by Argentina's Delegate. He then went on to say that, in many respects, the NAM meeting had not gone as Argentina would have wished, but that this was understandable given the unwritten rules of the NAM which leave the host country in control of proceedings and the drafting of the communique. (NOTE: Dalton was a member of the Argentine delegation to the 1976 NAM meeting in Sri Lanka, and continues to follow the activities of the NAM with interest.) DAS Eaton noted that a Latin American friend of his had told him that in the most recent meeting Cuba had ended up in a position of dominance in the NAM. He also said that if dominance were the proper word to describe the case, it is likely that the other member country delegations may begin to reconsider their own positions with respect to Cuban leadership of the NAM. Minister Dalton did not hold out too much hope for this, repeating that for the next three years Fidel Castro will be seen as the leader of the NAM unless he tries to pull it along into more radical positions and associations.

Minister Dalton and DAS Eaton next addressed Argentina's human rights situation and the effect this has on U.S.-Argentine relations. Minister Dalton noted that the article in today's Washington Post about Argentina's new law reducing the time period that must elapse before missing persons may be presumed dead is an example of how the efforts of his government to ease the suffering of survivors can backfire. He explained that his government has received numerous requests from family members of disappeared persons asking that their relatives be declared legally dead so that pensions may be paid and other legal matters can be cleared up. This new law was intended to address this problem. It also provides, he said, that pensions may be paid to the families of the disappeared and that, if they should

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subsequently reappear, no reimbursement will be required. DAS Eaton then pointed out that one issue which is not addressed by the new law is the question of how relatives of the disappeared are to learn of the fate of their loved ones. He asked if there were anything in the law which would close off or impede their efforts to learn what actually had happened to the disappeared. Minister Dalton said that he has read the text of the law and does not believe that there is anything which would affect requests for information. He went on to say that, in his opinion, the new law was intended for humanitarian purposes, to alleviate the suffering of the families of the missing, but that it has been seen in an entirely different light by many of those most concerned.

DAS Eaton then explained to Minister Dalton that the human rights ideal is deeply rooted in the American people, and that the human rights policy of the U.S. Government is a reflection of that ideal. Thus, we take human rights violations very seriously, and cannot be expected to do otherwise. Minister Dalton replied that he understands the deep origins of our human rights concerns, and has attempted to make visitors from Argentina and his government more aware of this fact, to assure them that this is not a question of a political issue but one of strong conviction.

DAS Eaton asked Minister Dalton about the current visit of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to Argentina, and what the future may hold for Argentina following the visit. Minister Dalton said that the visit is going smoothly, that the Commission is free to talk to everyone, receive their petitions and statements, and to visit those areas which it wishes to visit. Speaking frankly and personally, he said that he expects that the final report of the IAHRC will be very bad. Indeed, he said, if the last three paragraphs only of the report should say that there has been recent improvement in the situation, he will consider that the result will have been favorable. Looking ahead, Dalton said that there should be no further disappearances, and that Argentina should be able to begin to work its way back toward national unity and away from the mistakes of the past in the human rights area. He expressed hope that Argentina will be able to improve its human rights situation to the extent that it will no longer be an issue between our nations. However, he said that it will be some time before the perceptions of the situation enable such a desirable development to occur. For example, he said that the problem of the disappearances of the past will continue to be a heated issue. In this regard, he noted that he understands that the International Organizations Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee will hold three hearings on the disappeared, beginning on September 20, and will hear testimony from Amnesty International, the Washington Office on Latin America and the Council on Hemispheric Affairs. He also said that Assistant Secretary Patt Derian is expected to testify on October 18, 1979.

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